

Mr. Chairman/Madame Chair, committee members, good afternoon. My name is Becky Rutrough NAUGATUCK, CT. Thank you for allowing me to offer my testimony today in support of SB 462 AAC Civil Restraining & Protective Orders.

I am a domestic abuse survivor. This is my first time speaking publicly on topic.

For nearly 18 years I was married to a Naval Academy graduate. (USNA) The physical abuse started 2 1/2 years into my marriage. The financial control almost immediately. We moved to CT in 2000 upon becoming a civilian family when he accepted employment as a consultant with Arthur Andersen. I was a stay at home mother the entire marriage caring for 4 children. Holding down the fort while my abuser made his way through his career.

I am living proof domestic abuse holds no social boundaries.

For years my name was not on anything. I had no rights. No family of support. No way out. It was all his. He went to work. He earned the money. He controlled everything. Even me.

One night in November 2007 I was beaten and whipped by my abuser in front of my youngest son who had just turned 4. My daughters listened from upstairs. This was the first time in all those years I was beaten in front of the children.

I had 2 choices that night. I chose survival.

The morning after 11/2007 I called the police to report I had been beaten. Something I hadn't done in nearly 15 years. Once the police came and took the report and photos they explained the process to me. My abuser was going to be arrested and put in jail. DCFS was going to be called and I was advised to file a restraining order. I did just that. The police helped me as best they could but I needed more help.

I was in shock after being beaten in front of my children. Yet, I was worried about one thing that weekend. How was I, a stay at home mother, with only a high school education, and no access to money, going to support my children in the absence of my abuser while he was under the restraining order to stay away from the home? Then, self-doubt crept in. I began to doubt I was a victim of domestic abuse. I was so mentally controlled by my abuser I was talking myself out of my new found will to survive.

If this bill had been enacted in 11/2007 the awakened survivor in me would have been teamed up with a task force to investigate key points of the restraining order I filed, my near 15 years of isolation would've been no more. I don't have my family. Having a task force would've empowered me. My children would have been helped. My life would have been found out. My abuser would have been recognized for what he is. An abuser

who wrongly thought he owned me and had a right to control me physically, mentally, financially, sexually, economically, and emotionally.

Knowing I would've had 120 days of financial assistance would've empowered me and helped me to keep my focus on becoming a survivor. But I didn't have this bill to back me. My reality was brutal. I knew I had to remain his victim for my children and me to be provided for financially. I let go of my power and security of the restraining order and I let my abuser back into the home. He won.

For the next year and 3 months I remained at his mercy. So much more happened. Can you even guess what happened to me and my children in that year and 3 months? If not, can you imagine how I wake up every day and wish I had that year and 3 months of my life back? My children's lives?

Eventually, I filed for divorce January 2009. My abuser convinced me I would lose the children because I had no financial means. I withdrew my petition, 9 days later he had me served for divorce in front of our children. Shortly thereafter he stopped paying the mortgage. March 2010 I moved out of the marital residence. My divorce was final June 2010.

He stayed in the residence until December 2012 not paying the mortgage.

It has not been an easy journey for me and my children even present day.

I can't help but look back to when I filed the restraining order 11/07. If this bill had been enacted my abuser would have gotten his power taken away. A person in position of authority would have called him out on his behavior. I would have been empowered. Me. Perhaps I wouldn't face these current day frivolous court filings by my abuser. I'm not certain. But I can be certain I would've had the backing of this bill. There is strength in that.

My 20 year old daughter is here today. Help me in my quest to teach her victims deserve empowerment. SB 462 does precisely that.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to this. I'm honored to be able to share a portion of my story in hopes this bill will pass. Thank you.